

(From CIO Magazine, March 15, 2005)

Standards A Must For Adoption Of Health-Care IT

BY GRANT GROSS

It's no secret that the health-care industry needs to use IT better, but many doctors and hospitals are concerned about implementing technology such as electronic health records without interoperability standards in place. In January, members of a new U.S. government task force focusing on nationwide health-care IT met for the first time to discuss standards.



Scott Wallace

The 11-member Commission on Systemic Interoperability, which was established by the Medicare Modernization Act in 2003, is charged by Congress with creating a comprehensive plan for the nation's health IT infrastructure. Scott Wallace, president and CEO of the National Alliance for Health Information Technology and chairman of the new commission, says the health-care industry needs to use technology in order to cut skyrocketing costs and improve efficiency. Many in the industry maintain that electronic health records, which can follow patients everywhere, are the foundation for widespread adoption of IT throughout health care. Indeed, electronic records are essential to the future of the health-care industry, according to Gary A. Mecklenburg, president and CEO of Northwestern Memorial HealthCare and a member of the commission, hence the need for industrywide interoperability standards. "Those of us in health care have to get over thinking this is a choice," Mecklenburg said at the

commission's inaugural meeting in reference to adopting IT. "We must have technology. It's the cost of doing business. That's what we have to get over."

The commission has until Oct. 31 to deliver a plan for interoperability among health-care IT systems to Congress. [CIO](#)